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C O N F I D E N T I A L BAGHDAD 000433

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/17/2020

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: DPM ISSAWI: WORST OF DE-BA'ATH CRISIS IS OVER;  
SUPPORTS ELECTORAL CODE OF CONDUCT

Classified By: Robert S. Ford, Charge d'Affaires, a.i., for reasons 1.4  
(b) and (d).

¶1. (C) On February 15, Deputy PM Issawi told CDA his Iraqiyya coalition had weathered the worst of the de-Ba'athification storm, provided there were no further major incidents targeting them. Issawi responded favorably to the idea of a joint agreement and statement by the major coalitions on a code of political conduct which would seek to lower the high level of sectarian tension in the campaign. Coalition leaders subsequently met on February 17 and reportedly succeeded in endorsing common principles designed to prevent election-related violence and campaign violations. End Summary.

¶2. (C) DPM Rafi, e al-Issawi told CDA in a February 15 meeting that Iraqiyya had made it through the worst of the de-Ba,athification crisis. Though the coalition had lost MP Saleh al-Mutlaq and other candidates, it was moving forward to rally maximum support in advance of the March 7 election. He cautioned that this assessment was dependent on Iraqiyya and its candidates not being the target of other negative incidents, e.g. no further politically-motivated arrests, attacks, or charges of illegal campaign financing.

¶3. (C) CDA stressed that the Embassy was very committed to Iraq not returning to a state of dictatorship, noting that while the USG was not concerned with who won the election, it cared strongly how the election was conducted. Responding to Issawi's request for a strong U.S. statement on the illegitimacy of the de-Ba'athification process, CDA said the Embassy had raised its concerns in private with a number of senior officials. A public statement, CDA noted, risked making the United States an election campaign issue. CDA added that it was important for the Embassy to understand precisely what had occurred in the Accountability and Justice Commission (AJC), IHEC, and the Cassation Chamber during the process of barring candidates in order to accurately understand and discuss the matter.

Political Code of Conduct  
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¶4. (C) CDA promoted the Iraqiyya idea of a joint agreement and statement by the major political parties/coalitions aimed at reining in the current high levels of sectarianism present in the campaign. He told the DPM that VP Tariq al-Hashimi and PM Chief of Staff Tariq Abdullah had been receptive to this idea when he had met with them separately earlier in the day. CDA noted he had also broached the subject with Adnan Pachachi and Maisoon al-Damluji (Iraqiyya), who had reacted favorably. CDA urged Iraqiyya to raise the code idea with Massoud Barzani (Kurdish Alliance), emphasizing that in the long run, the best protection against political abuse against Kurds and Sunnis would be through Iraq's legal and political system. CDA

observed that Iraqiyya, KAL, and Iraqi Islamic Party support for such a joint statement would pressure the two major Shi'a coalitions (INA and State of Law) to join in.

15. (C) On February 17, representatives from Iraq's main political parties and coalitions met to discuss a political code of conduct as suggested by the Embassy. Issawi's office confirmed to PolCouns that the participants had succeeded, after four hours of negotiations, in agreeing on 11 principles designed to prevent election-related violence and campaign violations. These principles included a pledge to: not defame each other, not threaten or intimidate voters, accept the election results, not use security forces for political purposes, not use state resources for campaigning, and not to inject religion in the campaign. A more complete Qand not to inject religion in the campaign. A more complete readout will be provided septel.  
FORD